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RACINE COUNTY DEMONSTRATES MEASURABLE SUCCESS IN CHILD WELFARE REFORM

RACINE—Racine County has reduced child welfare placements by nearly 67% while maintaining strong child safety outcomes, demonstrating measurable success in prevention-focused reform.

Since 2017, out-of-home placements have declined from 350 children to 115 in 2025. During the same period, the number of children placed in residential care — the most restrictive and costly setting — has dropped from an average of 19 per month in 2018 to just 1 child per month in 2025.

These improvements reflect the County's implementation of prevention-focused strategies aligned with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), bipartisan legislation enacted in 2018 to strengthen families and reduce unnecessary out-of-home placements.

The reduction in placements has been achieved while maintaining strong safety standards. Only 5% of children reenter out-of-home care after reunification, demonstrating lasting stability for families.

In addition to improved outcomes, Racine County has reduced annual out-of-home care costs by more than 55% since 2017. Savings have been reinvested into early intervention services, mental health supports, and parent assistance programs designed to address challenges before they escalate into crisis.

In 2025, Racine County achieved a 98.3% Initial Assessment completion rate — the highest in county history. Child welfare professionals are required to complete investigations of child abuse and neglect within 60 days. This record-setting performance reflects strong case management, timely decision-making, and consistent oversight.

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families recently recognized Racine County as one of the highest-performing counties in the state for monthly caseworker contact compliance. For Federal Fiscal Year 2025, Racine County achieved a **99.25% compliance rate**, exceeding the federal requirement that at least 95% of children in out-of-home care receive face-to-face contact with a caseworker each month.

“These results show that prevention works,” said County Executive Ralph Malicki. “By investing in prevention and maintaining strong accountability, we are creating safer, more stable futures for children while ensuring resources are used wisely.”

Racine County will continue strengthening its child welfare system through responsible governance, informed decision-making, and a sustained commitment to the safety, stability, and well-being of children and families.

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